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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5416
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RUEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
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RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 0635
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1177
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0848
RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN 0045
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0241

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TRIPOLI 000868

NOFORN
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [LY](#) [UN](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER REQUESTS INVESTIGATION INTO ALLEGED U.S.
MISTREATMENT OF SENIOR LIBYAN OFFICIAL

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1. (S/NF) Summary: Foreign Minister Musa Kusa summoned the Ambassador to his office October 26 to convey very strong Libyan anger and disappointment in the treatment of Libyan UN Permanent Representative Abdulrahman Shalgam and his wife by John F. Kennedy Airport security officials upon their recent departure from New York. Kusa emphasized that the Libyan Government considered the situation very serious and that Libyan Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi was personally angered. Kusa demanded that the USG investigate the incident and respond with a report as soon as practical so that the Libyan side could determine what "measures" it would take in response. Kusa assured the Ambassador that the GOL would not treat AmCit travelers or diplomats in a reciprocal manner at Libyan airports. Libya is considering lodging a formal complaint at the United Nations, during which Shalgam may provide an account of his experience. The Department's guidance and assistance in investigating the situation is requested. End Summary.

2. (S/NF) A visibly angry Musa Kusa summoned the Ambassador (accompanied by P/E Chief) on October 26 to express very strong Libyan anger, including that of the Libyan Leader, regarding the reported treatment UN Permanent Representative Abdulrahman Shalgam had received recently during security processing at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York. Kusa said Shalgam and his wife were put in a room and subjected to "strip searches and rude behavior as if they were criminals." The trauma had affected Shalgam's wife so deeply that, according to Kusa, she is currently under hospital care.

3. (S/NF) Kusa called the incident unjustified and immoral: "Morally speaking, Shalgam is a guest in your country. If he had done something wrong or was a security threat, then that would have been a different story. How would you like it if your diplomats were treated by us in such a manner?" He argued that if a high level diplomat such as Shalgam -- a former foreign minister -- could experience such treatment by U.S. officials, then other Libyan diplomats or average Libyan travelers were probably facing even worse treatment. Kusa stated that the GOL was considering withdrawing Shalgam from his post as a result of the incident.

4. (S/NF) The Ambassador informed Kusa that the Embassy first heard of the incident via MFA diplomatic note four days prior to the meeting and was working with the Departments of State and Homeland Security to investigate the situation. Kusa believed

the State Department should have "known" about the incident immediately. He asserted that news of the incident had spread throughout the leadership and had resurrected intensive questioning as to how Libya could justify this new relationship with the United States, saying "if you do not desire to continue the relationship, then tell us. There is no need to treat Libyan nationals in such a manner."

15. (S/NF) The Ambassador told Kusa that Libya should not interpret the reported actions of a few individuals as reflective of an official, anti-Libya position within the USG. He added that both sides understand that, from time to time, problems will occur in the relationship, and that we should find a way to work through them. Kusa said the Libyan Government -- including Muammar al-Qadhafi himself -- wanted a full report from the U.S. explaining why a senior Libyan official had been subject to the alleged mistreatment. He was baffled by the circumstances that could have prompted such action. The Ambassador reiterated his assurances that the USG would review the circumstances surrounding the incident.

16. (S/NF) Kusa stated that Libya would not retaliate against U.S. travelers in response to the incident. He insisted on a speedy reply to the GOL's request for a full investigation. "We will consider the case open until we reach an acceptable conclusion. In light of what happens, we will carry out appropriate measures," he warned. Kusa threatened that Libya might be forced to take the issue to the UN General Assembly and that Shalgam may personally relate the events in that forum.

17. (S/NF) Comment: The incident involving Abdulrahman Shalgam, compounded by Libyan reports of previous incidents involving its diplomats and officials, has elicited attention and anger at the highest levels of the Libyan regime. Embassy requests expeditious Department assistance in investigating the

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circumstances surrounding the incident. As recent Swiss and Canadian encounters have shown, Libya takes these issues seriously and we need to provide a reply and find a solution quickly if the matter is not to escalate. End comment.
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